

Cliff Baechle, 8/19/2003

Sir,

I was a member of the 540th Trans Det (BARC) that was formed at Fort Story in 1966. I've always wondered if the BARC's that were in service in Vietnam were ever returned to the U.S. or if they were left there. I know we had four: 49, 50, 51 and 53. 52 was used for training. They were built by the Peterson Company in Minneapolis, I think. Earlier numbers were there too, but belonged to different units. Many, including ours became part of a unit, I believe was named the 1st BARC Company stationed in Qui Nhon.

Is that type of amphibious vehicle or the smaller LARC's still in use?

I've been curious.

Thanks,

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Rich,

Thanks for replying so quickly.

We deployed from Fort Story in November 1966, and arrived in late November as I recall. The BARC's or LARC LX went on two separate ships. The troops sailed on the *USNS Buckner*, arriving in Cam Ranh Bay. Captain Robert Manley was the CO when the unit was founded and deployed. He arrived as part of the advance party. By the time the rest of us arrived, he had been assigned to battalion hq. As it turned out, I was then the CO, a first lieutenant. We had two other officers, both of whom were transferred out. Lt. Fred Jacoby to battalion and Lt. Guy Junger to a Maintenance company. We had four BARC's which were used to bring cargo from ship to the beach and then to the drop off point on the beach. We were fully staffed with Sergeant First Class William Hiltibran the ranking NCO. On occasion the unit delivered cargo to Phan Rang. After several months in Cam Ranh Bay, the 540th was transferred to Qui Nhon, to join the 1st Provisional Barc Company. I believe ours was the fourth detachment to make up the company. The BARC's were used to unload ships in the harbor and make an occasional run to another location. That made 16 BARC's in the company, but two were detached to Duc Pho in support of Task Force Gallagher. One of the BARC's there caught fire and burned when the ammo dump exploded. Both units and the men were then returned to Qui Nhon. Two others, two from the 540th were then sent to Duc Pho. I went with them and our mission was to occasionally unload cargo, but more often the units were used to hold LCM's in place when they arrived to unload. The surf was very strong and the boats often had difficulty staying in place. The BARC's took a beating while tied up to the LCM's in strong weather. In addition, the BARC's were used to transport tanks and troops from the 101st Airborne to positions along the beach north of Duc Pho. Two units from Qui Nhon were sent north to I believe the Quang Nhai River for a mission to transport heavy mill equipment to an inland position along the river. Both became stuck in the muck of the river and the two units from Duc Pho were sent north to rescue them. As it turned out those two also became stuck. It was with much work and help from ARVN troops and as a firefight took place between troops on either side of the river that eventually all four finally were freed and returned to Duc Pho, mission up the river aborted.

Shortly before I rotated back to the States, the Duc Pho detachment was looking into deploying at Sa Hugynh, south of Duc Pho. I was later told that did happen. But that's the last I know of the fate of the BARC's and the people of the 540th.

Cliff